

hear you. Republicans hear you. I promise you, we are going to act. Growing our economy is going to be our No. 1 priority next Congress.

There are a number of things we can do to get the economy healthy again. We can reform our Tax Code to reduce the burden on American families and businesses. Right now our Nation has the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. More and more American companies are focusing their business operations overseas because the tax situation is so much better abroad.

That means American jobs are going overseas with them. We have lost our competitive edge in an increasingly global economy. Instead of pushing corporations out of our country, we should bring our Nation's corporate tax rate in line with those of other countries to keep more jobs here in the United States.

Another big thing we can do is repeal some of the burdensome government regulations that are weighing down businesses. While some government regulations are necessary, every administration has to remember that regulations have consequences. The more resources individuals and businesses spend complying with government regulations, the less they have available to focus on the growth and innovation that drive our economy and create new opportunities for American workers.

Over the past 8 years in particular, businesses have had to devote far too many resources to complying with government regulations. That has left them with few resources to dedicate to growing and creating jobs.

Another thing we need to do is address our national debt, which has nearly doubled over the past 8 years. That debt is a drag on our economy. It slows growth and reduces economic opportunity. It is time to get our government back on a budget.

Another way we can help lift the burden on American families is by repealing and replacing ObamaCare. The President's health care law is broken. The promise of lower premiums and affordable health care has given way to the reality of giant premium increases and massive deductibles. It is time to give the American people health care reform that actually works.

Another priority of the new Republican Congress will be national security. Americans are rightfully worried about the threat posed by terrorist groups such as ISIS, which has spread violence and devastation not only in the Middle East but across Europe and beyond. We have even experienced ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks on American soil in San Bernardino and Orlando.

More recently, there were attempted bombings in New York and New Jersey and an ISIS-inspired stabbing attack in Minnesota. Republicans are committed to defeating ISIS abroad and keeping Americans safe here at home. We intend to make sure that our law enforcement agencies and our Nation's

military have the tools they need to defeat terrorist threats. We will make sure that our military men and women remain the best equipped and the most prepared fighting forces on the planet.

Another key component to keeping Americans safe is securing our borders. We must have secure borders and policies that encourage legal immigration while discouraging illegal immigration.

Then there are the other priorities we need to address: confirming a Supreme Court nominee who will judge based on the law and the Constitution, protecting religious liberty, encouraging investment in our Nation's infrastructure, and more.

To all the Americans who voted for change in this election, to every worker who has felt left behind in this economy, I want to say again: We hear you. Republicans hear you. We are going to fight for your priorities here in Washington. We are committed to earning the trust that you placed in us on election day.

The election is over, and it is time to take up the work of governing the Nation. Our Nation is facing many challenges. It is time for all of us—Democrat and Republican, liberal and conservative—to unite to address them. If we work together, I firmly believe we will once again be able to say, as President Ronald Reagan once said:

American's best days are yet to come. Our proudest moments are yet to be. Our most glorious achievements are just ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from Arizona.

EARMARKS

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, a lot like indigestion, the desire for earmarks keeps coming back up. Tomorrow afternoon our colleagues in the House will vote on a provision to overturn the Congressional ban on earmarking. As someone who helped put that ban in place, I believe it is important to explain why it is very much still a necessity.

Consider the following: A teapot museum in North Carolina, an indoor rain forest in Iowa, bridges to nowhere in Alaska, a sheep institute in Montana, a Woodstock museum to commemorate the 1969 concert in New York, a \$350 million rocket launch site in Mississippi that was mothballed upon completion that has been derided as the "tower to nowhere," and the weather museum in Punxsutawney, PA. These are just some of the more infamous pork projects that were tucked into bills in Congress here during the bygone earmark era.

During the heyday of earmarking in 2006, I believe there were some 16,000 earmarks spread around among the appropriations bills at that time. Members of Congress gleefully touted the outrageous manner in which billions of dollars were being misspent on obscure, parochial projects. Earmarks were the

currency of what was dubbed the "favor factory" by a superlobbyist who would eventually go to jail for corruption.

Earmarks were used to reward campaign donors and political supporters and to buy and sell the votes of politicians. The deciding vote that was necessary to pass ObamaCare, for example, was secured with an earmark for Nebraska and derided as the "Cornhusker Kickback."

Republicans lost control of Congress in 2006, in part, as a result of the public's disgust with the corruption within the favor factory. When Republicans retook the House of Representatives in 2010, a moratorium was put on Congressional earmarking, which the Senate also adopted. That remains in place to this day.

Now some Republicans in the House are pushing to reopen the favor factory by lifting the moratorium, promising this time it will be different. Taxpayers ought to know that these promises are simply hogwash. Having spent years fighting against earmarks, I am disappointed that one of the very first votes after this election will be on a Republican-led proposal to bring back earmarks.

Congress should instead immediately pass legislation to make the ban on earmarks a permanent statutory prohibition. After all, you cannot drain the swamps by feeding the alligators pork. With our national debt approaching \$20 trillion, taxpayers expect Congress to focus on cutting wasteful and unnecessary spending instead of pigging out at the trough.

One of the worst parts of earmarks is that we spend our time here when we are earmarking not providing oversight for the massive appropriations bills that get passed. That is the worst part of it. We spend time doling out what amounts to a small portion of the Federal budget, but it takes so much time and effort from Members and their staffs just to secure that small bit of money that we are not spending the time we should providing oversight on the rest of the budget. That is the biggest crime of earmarks.

Instead of bringing them back, I hope that we will actually pass a statutory prohibition that will remain.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, like the majority of Americans who supported the Democratic candidate for President in the most recent election, I was disappointed by the results. But last Wednesday, I publicly congratulated President-Elect Donald Trump. I believe the bedrock principle of America is that we select our leaders and then come together as a country to try to find common ground and move forward.

On election night, the President-elect said: